

What Must Be Done in the Next Two Years
2011 Ifl Senior Leadership Meeting
December 8-9, 2011
David Coleman, Keynote Speaker

1 *Lauren Resnick:* – Who does need some introduction, even though he asked
2 me not to do it. So I'm gonna not fully comply with his request. And I'm carrying
3 here a brief biography of him, but I will comply by not reading that to you. I think
4 it's probably in your folders anyhow. So I want to tell you about the first time that
5 I remember meeting David, although I think it might not have really been the first
6 time.

7 I'm trying to get out of the light! *[Laughter]*

8 Okay. And he was invited to a sort of staff meeting where we were beginning in
9 the Institute to think about what our stance was gonna be on the fact that new
10 standards were maybe going to come our way. It was before the Common Core
11 State Standards effort announced, and another person we were working with,
12 whom I won't name tonight, asked if maybe at our next meeting he could bring
13 David Coleman with him. And I said, "Who's David Coleman?" and he gave me
14 something like what I have in my hand. Those characteristics didn't seem
15 particularly relevant to what we were gonna do, you know, like being a Rhodes
16 Scholar and having both Cambridge and Oxford degrees – all that kind of stuff.
17 That's nice, but it's really not so relevant. *[Laughter]*

18 But I sat up and I remember being with Tony, who was there, when he handed
19 out a list of ten – this was within moments of arrival from the airport – handed out
20 a list of ten proposed standards that at that moment – some of you probably have
21 seen a variance of this – at that moment seemed as reasonable as anything else
22 for the new English standards that were gonna be forthcoming. The first one
23 said, "Read like a detective." That's it. That was standard number one – so
24 powerful a one that it's driven out of my mind the other nine. But you have to
25 imagine a bunch of Institute for Learning people and School of Education people,
26 leaders in English education – I'm talking about Tony now – leaders in some kind
27 of trans- relationship between psychology and schooling. And most or some
28 subset of our fellow, ones involved in English/Language Arts. And we look at this
29 and my memory is there was a long moment of silence, right, Tony? Do you
30 remember that, too, David? *[Laughter]*

31 And what I really want to say is that reading like a detective is now part of our
32 core standards. It's not there in words, but it informs – that was a kind of
33 inventive way to put an idea on the table that established a standard, very
34 different from – I don't know what I can say – the boring ones that we grew up
35 with and are used to, like what I put together in New Standards. They were

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36 standards for English, but if anybody ever wrote that way in my books they'd get
37 pushed out.

38 But read like a detective would've made it into the books, and you can see if you
39 think about it for a minute what that would mean. I'm not gonna do it, but I am
40 tempted to ask you to turn to your neighbor and offer a – let's do it. What do you
41 think is the definition of read like – what does read like a detective mean to you?
42 Let's talk about it for a second. *[Pause]*

43 Eh, it worked. Okay, it worked. Now I'm gonna give you the answer.

44 *David Coleman:* All the evidence is there and it all matters.

45 *Lauren Resnick:* Okay, so this is the kind of person we are gonna be
46 privileged to here tonight. He has been involved in virtually every step of setting
47 the national standards, and he doesn't have a single credential for it. He's never
48 taught in an elementary school – I think. You know, I actually don't know. He's
49 never edited a scholarly journal, but I think he has written scholarly papers. And
50 a variety of other things that have – you know, everybody here has done some
51 of, he hasn't done. *[Laughter]* You told me you didn't want to do a standard –
52 *[Laughter]* so he hasn't done the standard things, and now he's gonna tell you
53 what he has done, or what he probably will say he has not done others have
54 done, but which he has helped others to want to do and to _____ do. And we're
55 all gonna be living with the fruits of that, for the next five years, so listen carefully.

56 *[Pause]*

57 *David Coleman:* Can you hear me? You know, you'd think someone with
58 Lauren's experience would understand you never tell the truth when you're
59 introducing someone. It's kind of like a eulogy in reverse. I think the clear lesson
60 from tonight is don't ask Lauren to speak at your funeral. *[Laughter]* She clearly
61 doesn't understand what eulogy stands for.

62 No, I thank you so much for your attention. I know it's getting late and it's after
63 dinner now, and so I'm gonna be – try to be brief. I'm gonna talk in two parts.
64 I'm gonna first try to answer a very specific questions, which is I think the title that
65 Nancy and her team put together, which is what should we do over the next two
66 years? I'm gonna dare to be exceedingly specific about that question because

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67 it's a question that is very much on your minds as you're embarking on this work.
68 And it is my style to think that anything vague in response to that question is
69 totally not helpful. So I aim to be extremely specific, and hence vulnerable to
70 criticism. *[Laughter]*

71 The second thing – I feel since I'm already bloodied I might as well really go for it
72 and teach a couple of poems in front of an excellent poet, who is Tony, sitting in
73 front of me. So he might just mug me at any moment during the second part of it
74 where we're gonna look at two poems together, 'cause I thought that would be
75 fun, a kind of after-dinner pleasure and an after-dinner picture of what this kind of
76 instruction might look like.

77 If you don't mind, I'd like to talk a minute about how this work builds on some of
78 the work that IFL has done over the years, and it gives me a chance to basically
79 do a very important rhetorical maneuver, which is to blame Lauren. *[Laughter]*
80 So if there are aspects of what I'm about to say that you disagree with and if the
81 Common Core is kind of a pain in the ass, built on top of your other duties while
82 funding is being cut, don't blame me. Blame Lauren, because there is clearly no
83 way this country would be talking about 46 states adopting a set of common
84 standards had not a somewhat younger, still revolutionary mind thought that this
85 nation needed a new set of standards. And for that I am most grateful to you.

86 I have learned some other things with Lauren along the way. One of them is the
87 kind of humility she talked about, about qualifications. I actually think it's really
88 important to try to base what I'm about to say to you on evidence I share with you
89 rather than on the sands of my qualifications. So if I ask you or talk to you about
90 doing something it should be evident that it makes sense to you to do, 'cause I
91 have no other authority. I will talk to you about the standards _____ 'cause
92 you're looking to me to do that, but I also hope to talk to you about evidence we
93 encountered along the way of developing that we found overwhelming and
94 compelling, enough so that we deemed it essential to act on for the safety and
95 well-being of children.

96 Lauren, though, has challenged me over the years with some more ideas, and
97 some I want to put on the table for you, all in the sake of striking back. One of
98 them is that these standards are worthy of nothing if the assessments built on
99 them are not worthy of teaching to, period. This is quite a demanding charge, I
100 might add to you, because it has within it the kind of statement – you know, “Oh,
101 the standards were just fine, but the real work begins now in defining the

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102 assessment,” which if you were involved in the standards is a slightly exhausting
103 statement to make.

104 But let’s be rather clear: we’re at the start of something here, and its promise –
105 our top priorities in our organization, and I’ll tell you a little bit more about our
106 organization, is to do our darnedest to ensure that the assessment is worthy of
107 your time, is worthy of imitation. It was Lauren who propounded the great rule
108 that I think is a statement of reality, though not a pretty one, which is teachers will
109 teach towards the test. There is no force strong enough on this earth to prevent
110 that. There is no amount of hand-waving, there’s no amount of saying, “They
111 teach to the standards, not the test; we don’t do that here.” Whatever. The truth
112 is – and if I misrepresent you, you are welcome to take the mic back. But the
113 truth is teachers do. Tests exert an enormous effect on instructional practice,
114 direct and indirect, and it’s hence our obligation to make tests that are worthy of
115 that kind of attention. It is in my judgment the single most important work we
116 have to do over the next two years to ensure that that is so, period. So when you
117 ask me, “What do we have to do over the next years?” we gotta do that. If we do
118 anything else over the next two years and don’t do that, we are stupid and shall
119 be betrayed again by shallow tests that demean the quality of classroom
120 practice, period.

121 I could talk also about things I’ve learned from Tony and things I’ve learned from
122 the team he works with, but they’re gonna so disagree with what I’ll say next that
123 I don’t want to shame them by associating themselves with my work any further.
124 But let me begin.

125 I want to give you an outline of the core standards, the evidence on which they’re
126 based, but I want to be very practical if that’s okay. I think you’ve heard enough
127 about the standards in general terms, so I want to, if it’s okay with you, cut to the
128 quick and be like if I was a superintendent like my friend Clayton over here –
129 back in the saddle, congratulations; that’s wonderful. If I were a superintendent
130 in his team, what exactly would I do year one and year two based on evidence,
131 based on what the standards demand, that will help my children? Even though I
132 get it: the state tests are not gonna change over those two years and you have to
133 perform on existing metrics. You are caught in a bind and I want to be honest
134 about it, right? You’ve got the Common Core and you’ve got your existing state
135 standards and work, and if you’re truly screwed you’re in Texas. *[Laughter]* My
136 friends from Texas in the back are like, “Can we leave now and go to a bar?
137 ‘Cause we didn’t even adopt these stupid standards yet.” *[Laughter]*

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138 But I want to try to talk to you tonight about things I think are worth doing anyway.
139 Does that make sense? That is, I want to talk to you about work worth doing,
140 that I think will aid your performance on existing instruments and far more on the
141 instruments to come. Am I being clear? I am only interested in things you can
142 actually do. I'm not in a dreamy moment conversation type thing. I'm interested
143 in taking seriously the facts as they are before you; that is, the real people you
144 have now working with you and for you, the real kids now in front of you with their
145 deficits and all their needs, et cetera. So with that in mind, I'm about to jump in,
146 but I'm just gonna say one word about my own organization, which is Student
147 Achievement Partners.

148 Student Achievement Partners, all you need to know about us are a couple
149 things. One is we're composed of that collection of unqualified people who were
150 involved in developing the common standards. And our only qualification was
151 our attention to and command of the evidence behind them. That is, it was our
152 insistence in the standards process that it was not enough to say you wanted to
153 or thought that kids should know these things, that you had to have evidence to
154 support it, frankly because it was our conviction that the only way to get an
155 eraser into the standards writing room was with evidence behind it, 'cause
156 otherwise the way standards are written you get all the adults into the room about
157 what kids should know, and the only way to end the meeting is to include
158 everything. That's how we've gotten to the typical state standards we have
159 today.

160 The notion of evidence was a way to do two things: was to focus on what
161 mattered most, and to erase much of which surrounded it. I think that core
162 principle will be the most important single one for you to take away tonight. If you
163 see these standards as an addition to your current tasks, as one more burden on
164 an overburdened cart, you will fail. If after my remarks it is not absolutely clear
165 how much you can stop doing and what you can focus on instead doing, we're
166 nowhere. We do not have the resources, leisure, or time to invest in a whole
167 new set of initiatives around these Common Core standards. Is that clear? We
168 have to clearly understand what is removed. Teachers need to understand what
169 is removed. What is removed to make way for the work that matters? Does that
170 make sense? Otherwise it is simply an impossible task. So I'm gonna talk a lot
171 about what goes as well as what stays. Clear enough so far?

172 In terms of Student Achievement Partners we're composed largely of those
173 people who were involved in authoring the standards and developing the
174 evidence, even though as it's rightly told, you know, both teachers' unions,
175 teachers from throughout the country, parents, 48 states – everybody was

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176 involved in writing these standards. So I'm only talking about writing in a manner
177 of speaking, but we were involved in developing them and had an occasional turn
178 of phrase, like reading like a detective, which Tony Petrosky wrote me the single
179 most beautiful e-mail about that I still keep a printed copy of nearby, as to what
180 that really means.

181 But briefly we, the authors of the standards, hold on to three principles now going
182 forward, those of us who have joined Student Achievement Partners. They are
183 the following: Always be overwhelmed by loud voices in back of you. *[Laughter]*
184 There are three. So those of us who have chosen to work together have chosen
185 three principles. Number one: We do not and will not accept money from the
186 publishers of any curriculum or assessment at any time, whether for profit or not-
187 for-profit.

188 The second interesting one is we will not compete for any state or district RFPs.
189 We adopt this second one because we believe in a vibrant market of other
190 people competing for these things, also 'cause we think the district and state
191 RFPs tend to suck. We think that if states and districts are gonna get better stuff,
192 they have to rewrite their requests. Does that make sense? That if the RFPs are
193 weak, so the vendor community reaction is weak. And it would be stupid if we
194 were trying to write the RFPs and then compete for them. So when I talk to you
195 tonight it is – if any mistake I make intellectually or socially is solely a result of our
196 stupidity, but not a result of our avarice or desire for material gain. *[Laughter]*

197 The third principle is we have no intellectual property of our own, which hopefully
198 does not mean that we have no ideas. It does mean, however, that anything I
199 share with you and anything we in the future share with you, exemplars,
200 anything, you can take, reuse, make better, especially without attribution.
201 Nothing bothers me more when it's like copyright this group – please say – no,
202 unnecessary. And after I'm done you'll want to distance yourselves as much
203 from me as possible, so that probably helps you, but I really mean it. So
204 everything we develop and give is usable, reusable, changeable, without any
205 cost or attribution.

206 So those are our three principles. And now let's get to what do mean tonight
207 about what you should be doing over the next two years regarding the standards.
208 Let's start with math and then do literacy. I'll probably spend a little more time on
209 literacy because as weak as my qualifications are there, in math they're even
210 more desperate in their lacking. *[Laughter]*

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211 In mathematics the most shocking thing about the high-performing countries that
212 are beating the pants off us in math – see, I think there’s an image in this country
213 about the East Asian countries and other high-performing countries in math. If
214 we were all interviewed I think we have a shared picture in private, which is this:
215 They’re working harder than we are, their kids work harder, they may not be quite
216 as creative but that’s only gonna last for so long, and this country’s best days –
217 we’re gonna get overwhelmed by this kind of tidal wave of harder work. That’s I
218 think the basic feeling of the American country today. Strikingly, though, the
219 Singapore website, as Lauren’s great friend Phil Dara has pointed out, does not
220 say, “Work harder, do more,” which is what we expect it to say. It says in fact,
221 “Teach less, learn more.” What is most striking about the high-performing
222 countries in mathematics is they focus on far fewer topics and do them with much
223 greater depth and sophistication than we do here. To be precise, in kindergarten
224 through second grade, three and only three topics are common to the high-
225 performing countries in mathematics. Those are whole numbers, their
226 operations, and the quantities they measure. That’s it.

227 Following that focus, the Common Core standards now adopted focus
228 relentlessly in kindergarten through second grade on the addition and subtraction
229 of whole numbers and the quantities they measure. You could describe
230 kindergarten through second grade as a master class in addition and subtraction.

231 Interestingly, for my friends in Texas, deliberately in high-performing countries
232 fractions are postponed. One thing that is so stupid about who’s standards are
233 higher is the kind of “if you introduce it earlier, you’re higher.” I think you’re only
234 higher in the kind of pot-induced fantasy rather than the reality of performance.
235 *[Laughter]* That is, it’s not higher to introduce these things earlier. It in fact
236 doesn’t allow for the real mastery and muscularity of performance around whole
237 numbers.

238 In third through fifth grade, as I’ve hinted, the mighty art enters that most
239 precedes and predicts algebraic performance, which is fractions and its closely-
240 related ideas of division and subtraction, ‘cause obviously fractions are already
241 beginning to show you what division looks like, as well as what multiplication
242 means. Those core capacities over third through fifth grade pave the way for
243 proportional reasoning, of course, and expansion to the rest of the number
244 system, and if you’re working at a deliberate speed in math, to handle linear
245 equations and algebra in grade eight.

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246 That in mathematics – think of it like a trunk of a tree or the handle of a fork. This
247 core of math is necessary for all the future work you can do in math and enables
248 all the future work. That is, with command of those arenas of mathematics and
249 those arenas alone, you can do tremendous work in data analysis, advanced
250 work in algebra and, like, the calculus and the trigonometry, as well as modeling
251 multiple representation.

252 Obviously along with focus comes depth. That is, when I say just do fewer
253 things, it's not like, "Woo-hoo, holiday! We can just do less stuff and go home
254 earlier," right? It means you do those things at a greater depth. What exactly do
255 I mean by depth? I mean three things. I mean fluency, application, and
256 understanding.

257 By fluency in math, I want you to imagine being fluent in French or another
258 foreign language where you do not hesitate to solve a problem. There are a few
259 key fluencies – the standards are strict in identifying only one to two per year in
260 kindergarten through eighth grade. But of these things, yes, people have to have
261 memory, yes practice, yes rote in a sense, a kind of ability of fluency through
262 repeated practice. Sometimes people on the left are very uncomfortable with
263 that, but for those areas of math it's extremely important you have that fluidity.

264 But at the same time around those core areas, application and understanding
265 matter equally. So when I say application in math, that's your ability to apply
266 math to a situation even when you're not asked to do so. And you can see the
267 importance of that. When someone's about to rip you off with a mortgage, they
268 rarely say, "It's a good time to do the math. You should consider pulling out a
269 calculator right now." Math is only powerful – and I'm sure all of you notice this in
270 your lives, that math is powerful in career and college because mathematical
271 people have this awesome power to choose to apply it when the rest of the
272 people aren't. They see at a moment that a key ratio is operating that breaks the
273 problem. It's not that someone handed them a problem and said, "This is a ratio
274 right now." So if math is to have its power it must have application built into it.
275 And of course understanding is the ability to apply that core set of math to
276 surprising and new problem types, to a wide range of problem types.

277 What then does this mean for assessment? Because we are going back to that.
278 I think one of the most simple reasons that teachers do not trust assessment
279 today and parents do not is a very simple problem. I'm gonna put it as simply as
280 I can. There is on average at least 40 topics annually in the American
281 mathematics curriculum, period. Does anyone know what the average number of

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282 questions is on a standardized test? Forty – good guess. What that means, is
283 on a standardized test you typically have at best two, maybe three questions on
284 a topic, and then you're not gonna cover some of the others, so it's like Russian
285 roulette. What's gonna get examined this year? And at best I get, none of us,
286 no physotechian, Lauren's much more sophisticated at that stuff than I am, but
287 basically the more items you have to explore someone's understanding of
288 something, the more reliable your understanding of their understanding is gonna
289 be, and the more different ways you can see them explore, right?

290 Imagine for a moment if 50 to 70 percent of an exam, instead of being all over
291 the place, focused on the major mathematics work of that grade. And the reason
292 why that would be so honest is without that mathematical mastery, these
293 students are not in fact going forward. Math tests as they are today are actually
294 an illusion, 'cause you can pass them without a mastery of the math you really
295 need to go forward. Do you see what I'm saying? If you get all this other –
296 patterns and all this other stuff we do in early grades, do some data problems,
297 bait and switch, jump around a little bit, jump to the next topic but you don't have
298 fractions, you are truly screwed, but you may have passed the test. Do you see
299 the problem?

300 So when we redesign assessment, focus is one of the most important principles
301 so that it offers an in-depth, diverse look at the masteries that matter most. And
302 that way it offers what we should look for in assessment, which is something like
303 a job description or a set of priorities that really affect you, that say, "Without this
304 students shall not go forward, and hence in my classroom they are a subject of
305 concentration." So in mathematics, focus and its closely-related concept of
306 coherence and depth – focus, coherence so it builds on one another, and depth
307 are at the heart of these math standards.

308 We could do a lot more on math, but I want to pause now and say, "Okay, got it.
309 What the heck do I do about it? And what do I do about it over a two-year
310 period?" I'm gonna answer you in ruthlessly blunt terms.

311 Year one: Already we're talking about, like, the spring at best, right? I mean,
312 we're here in December – you know, are we talking year one being next year? If
313 you're gonna do anything fast, I think you lead with focus. The most important
314 single idea in these mathematics standards is that some math is much more
315 important than others. This is confused by all instructional materials that are put
316 in front of teachers because they present it all as if it's equally important. Do you
317 see the problem? That is a deliberate confusion. It's not so. There's a core of

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318 math that matters a lot more. So if you don't get in K-2 addition and subtraction
319 of whole numbers and the quantities they measure you're really in trouble, and if
320 you master it you're really very – you see what I'm saying? So what I say to you
321 this year is do a few things about focus for sure.

322 Number one: Before you get new, great – I would love to tell you that I have new,
323 great mathematical curricula for you which examines the focus areas and
324 beautiful depth and ability. That's year two or three, right? Let's just admit.
325 When publishers are telling you they already have great Common Core-aligned
326 materials in mathematics I hope you have a little skepticism in you, 'cause it's
327 amazing that they developed them before the core standards were developed.
328 *[Laughter]* But what you can do is take your existing work and really focus. So
329 what we've given you in your folders is a description of the major work in math for
330 each grade, and we will follow up and share with IFL, our partners. As we refine
331 our sense of what the priorities in math are, we'll give it to you.

332 Now – so what I'm saying is first I would go through your existing curricula. I
333 would make sure first that your teachers know – every teacher – the major work
334 of each grade. It's like a couple of sentences long, so I'm not talking about, like,
335 a crazy – they should know the key fluencies for every grade, period. Then you
336 as a district or together what we can do is go through existing curricula and find
337 those, and at least make more time so that teachers can spend the time and
338 work to have the time to teach and their students can have time to practice
339 towards those areas. Am I making sense? That's phase one. Most state
340 standards based on any calculus take about 30 years to deliver, so it is okay to
341 begin with focus, if you get my gist.

342 The game in math in America has been quite damaging, because the things I'm
343 talking about, which sounds like arithmetic and basic things, are actually very
344 difficult. Make no mistake: Fractions are hard, as any of you know who have
345 really wrestled with them. And so what we've done is we've given kids and
346 teachers the out of moving on to the next topic. You know, if you don't do that,
347 move on to the next topic. And that's not how math works. Without those core
348 areas the door is in fact closed. So the first thing I would do is go through
349 existing materials, focus it.

350 Number two: All your professional development spending in year one goes
351 towards what? The major work of the grade, period. No negotiation. Only
352 professional development in the district, major work of the grade.

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353 Three: Interim assessment, your other tool right before you. What does it focus
354 on? Overwhelmingly the major work of the grade. Now you may say, "This is a
355 little spooky, Dave, 'cause I've still got dumb state test coming that measures the
356 whole waterfront. And I'm a superintendent and I'm fighting for my life every
357 year." Hong Kong covers in its curriculum half of the topic that are on the TIMSS
358 International Math Test. Half of them are in the Hong Kong curriculum, 50
359 percent. The US covers all of the TIMSS topics in our curriculum. Who performs
360 better on the TIMSS test? Like by a lot; it's like not even close. Why? Because
361 the core of math I'm describing to you is so flexible and powerful that it applies to
362 most of the other math of the grade. Do you see what I'm saying? So it is a safe
363 bet to begin focusing now, and then in my second year I would drive depth as
364 much as possible. I would introduce some depth this year; that is, the notions of
365 fluency, application, understanding. But it's gonna take time to gradually teach
366 teachers what does application, understanding look like in their specific areas of
367 fractions, et cetera. That I think unfolds in year two. By then tools will have
368 begun to develop that will be more helpful. So I would lead with focus and then
369 go to depth. That's my personal view. Given the limits you have, that's what I
370 would do in mathematics.

371 So I'm gonna pause for a minute on math before I jump into literacy, where we'll
372 spend a bit more time. And you also are welcome to disagree with me if I've
373 gotten something terribly wrong. See, it's good I got you late after some food.
374 Any questions about mathematics for this year, right now, concerns? That's
375 'cause you're from Texas, ma'am. *[Laughter]* I know she's not. I was just trying
376 to get another cheap shot in at Texas.

377 *Audience Member:* This is a person from Pittsburgh, so _____.

378 *David Coleman:* I know, I know. I was joking. I have a bad sense of humor.
379 I will speak louder. I find that the softer I speak the less people can argue with
380 me. *[Laughter]* I will speak up. I'm sorry about that. I think that this mic may not
381 quite do it. I think if I use this mic it's louder. Is that right? Okay, I'll use this –
382 the mic from now on. Anything else? Yeah.

383 *Audience Member:* One of the things that struck me when you were describing
384 year one – what I thought about is that it really will require teachers to be real
385 experts in their subject matter.

386 *David Coleman:* I'm gonna repeat just in case people didn't hear 'cause you
387 didn't have the mic in front of you. She said that as I described year one,

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388 teachers would have to be experts in their subject matter 'cause they're really
389 gonna be spending more time on fewer things. I'm gonna actually say the
390 opposite just for fun. Year one your teachers are not expert yet. I'm assuming
391 they've learned nothing more. I've just begun as a superintendent or a
392 leadership team to realign professional development around the focus areas, but
393 it's just beginning to hit. I've got kind of the same people I had before. I'm just
394 being blunt. We haven't been able to make them experts yet.

395 All we're doing year one is saying, "Take time with this stuff. Around this stuff,
396 take time. Take time examining your students. Work towards greater mastery.
397 Do this work and do it well. It's your absolute top priority." They are not yet
398 stronger.

399 Year two, now that you've invested all your professional development, focused
400 your _____, they've spent much more time with these materials, now you're
401 ready to gradually make teachers more expert. And what's nice is – teacher
402 expertise is easy to say but harder to achieve, right? But at least you're
403 achieving it around a more focused area, so at least now you've cleared the field
404 and you're not saying be the expert equally in everything in mathematics. You're
405 saying be disproportionately expert at a few things that matter.

406 So I think we have to look for teacher expertise as an investment in year one and
407 beginning to deliver in year two and following, just in terms of being candid.

408 Yeah, please?

409 *Audience Member:* You mentioned something about Singaporean math and
410 Hong Kong math as the leading successful in terms of mathematics. Do you say
411 the same thing for Japanese mathematics as well?

412 *David Coleman:* You know, there's some very interesting on Japan, which I'm
413 not expert, but around – you know, there's some wonderful research around kind
414 of – both actually separately done in Japan, and some work actually in China,
415 which of course are very different places but a similar practice around elementary
416 school teachers doing relatively deep learning work around these core areas of
417 arithmetic that looks very promising. And a lot of people ask us about Singapore
418 math, for example, because there is a product with that name. I'm not ready yet,
419 nor will we likely ever at Student Achievement Partners kind of say, "Look at this,
420 this is a good product," yet. We're letting the market unfold, and I think every

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421 product we've seen could use this focus and attempt. And I think that there's
422 gonna be some very interesting work over the next few years as math focuses on
423 what matters to find what international examples are most lively.

424 *Audience Member:* Thank you.

425 *David Coleman:* Literacy? Everyone's like, "He better get going to literacy
426 'cause we've got to go home." [Laughter] Okay, literacy. I'm sure all of you know
427 the kind of haunting data that surrounds literacy in this country. I find the most
428 haunting data the NAEP data in eighth grade reading performance, because if
429 you look at eighth grade NAEP performance it is a tabletop. It has been flat for
430 about 40 years, during which – 40 – during which time we have doubled or tripled
431 educational expenditures. So in my personal judgment we have hit a wall in later
432 literacy. That is, we simply, despite all the work in early reading over the past
433 few years – which has been debated as to its impact but the most optimistic
434 would argue has led to some growth in fourth grade reading and some greater
435 command. Eighth grade reading scores have remained absolutely flat. And I
436 don't think I need to argue with you or discuss with you how devastating that is,
437 because if a student can't read past the eighth grade level they're obviously
438 doomed in terms of career and college readiness and all we hoped for them.

439 So I want you to look at the core standards for a moment as a battering ram, as
440 an engine to take down that wall. That was our core design principle in thinking
441 about them. So how do they attempt to do that? And then I'm gonna talk to you
442 about some of their limits, what they haven't fixed and some more depths, and
443 then I want to again talk about the two or three things you can do about it this
444 year and next year.

445 So in the core standards, the first major shift in instruction is a focus on reading
446 to build knowledge in both elementary school and after it. So what's most
447 shocking about elementary school in this country for many people is
448 overwhelmingly what students read in K-5 today is stories. There is data that
449 only 7 to 15 percent of what students now read during elementary school is
450 informational text. Informational text is not a beautiful work, like reading like a
451 detective for example, but informational text in this case has a lot of beauty in it
452 because it includes reading about science, history, the arts. It is everything that
453 is non-literary in that sense. Everything – now of course literature has its own
454 knowledge, and through the contributions of Massachusetts and other states – I
455 love the K-5 literature standards and think they explore carefully the structure of
456 stories and of mythology and other – and poetry and drama in a wonderful way.

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457 But that is not enough. The data is overwhelming that – from kids from various
458 backgrounds especially, that the knowledge that they gain in kindergarten
459 through fifth grade, as well as the – including pre-K, by the way – the knowledge
460 that attends on them, including the vocabulary closely related to them, is
461 absolutely essential for reading more complex texts going forward. So the big
462 shift in the Common Core standards is it demands that 50 percent of the work of
463 elementary schools is based on informational text, on learning about the world.

464 And when you look at the kind of unintended consequences of standards and
465 assessments, what happened, as you know, is we only tested reading and
466 writing in the elementary school, or reading, and – reading and math, to be
467 precise. And since then reading only was reading literature, everyone expanded
468 the literacy blocks, right? So in other words, schools – how many people in this
469 room have extended literacy blocks to ensure their students read at a young
470 age? Most, right? If during that time they're reading mostly literature or
471 overwhelmingly so, what have you done? You've, by extending the literacy
472 portion, banished history and science from the elementary school.

473 What is most exciting for elementary school teachers about these standards is
474 that they recall, they re-inaugurate elementary school teachers' rightful role as
475 guides to the world. It is a change in their job description to say, "It is right and
476 just that you bring your students into a world of knowledge during the years they
477 are in your care." And it is crucial that they do so, that that knowledge is built in a
478 coherent way within grades as well as across grades. And there's an example of
479 this in the standards in the text on the human body in a sample succession of
480 texts.

481 That extends through later grades in the fact that these standards are not only
482 standards for English/Language Arts, but standards also for literacy in history
483 and social studies as well as science and technical subjects. And that's an area
484 where IFL have felt has been a voice – you could say in the wilderness, if you
485 had a biblical cast of mind for quite – many years. It's not like this is a new idea
486 to this crowd, that we should read and write across the curriculum, but this is the
487 first body of academic standards that makes it a requirement equally for students
488 and teachers. I am sick of people, to be rather frank with you, who tell me that
489 art teachers don't want to teach this, 'cause our kids have to be able to do it,
490 period, for their success. And what's interesting about the standards is rather
491 than saying to social studies and history teachers that they should become
492 reading teachers, which I think is a losing game, it says instead they must – they
493 must – enable their students to evaluate and analyze primary and secondary
494 sources. Science teachers must not become literary teachers. What they must

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495 become is teachers who enable their students to read primary sources of the sort
496 of direct experimental results as well as reference documents to build their
497 knowledge of science. But what is not allowed is a content teacher to think that if
498 they just tell their students enough content and their students have no
499 independent capacity to analyze and build that content knowledge, that they are
500 a success. Clear?

501 So the second principle behind building knowledge is that content area teachers
502 are absolutely responsible for the academic literacy of their students. I think this
503 is particularly important for you in middle school. If you do not get your middle
504 school teachers on board with getting their students truly ready to read
505 increasingly more complex scientific and historical texts, you are doomed to
506 failure. I'm just kind of telling you. I think the data is rather clear. When students
507 reach high school without those capacities there's almost no high school we've
508 invented that can repair the harm. So we've got to do it, okay? So think – so in
509 terms of year one plans, that will figure prominently.

510 The second shift in reading is reading and writing based on evidence. And
511 Lauren beautifully described the notion of reading based on evidence, that is
512 reading like a detective, the respect and reverence that demands that the text is
513 the first source of evidence. What we've found striking is we looked at instruction
514 – actually, and I don't mean this just 'cause of my joking tonight, we looked at it in
515 two states. We tried to pick two states that were as similar as possible, so we
516 picked Vermont and Texas. *[Laughter]* And what we found was in those two
517 states there was a remarkable similarity, which is that upwards of 80 percent of
518 the questions that students were asked when talking about a text were
519 answerable without direct reference to the text in front of you. That is, they were
520 about it – you know, like what it connected to, what it made you think about, big
521 questions, small questions, all sorts of questions, but not questions that required
522 you to demonstrate an evidentiary command of the text, which is essential in job-
523 related reading but also college-related reading. So there's a big gap.

524 In writing the most popular forms of writing today in the American high school are
525 overwhelmingly – besides texting, which is not for credit – are overwhelmingly a
526 narrative of either your personal opinions or what you think – excuse me, what
527 you feel or what you've experienced, so a narrative either of your experience or
528 your opinions. And assessments, to Lauren's point, follow this pattern. So if you
529 look at the NAEP or the MCATs, there are all these weird questions on tests.
530 "Describe your favorite day." These – I'm not making this up. "Who are your
531 heroes? Are they, like, athletes, or are they super models, or sports stars? Tell
532 us and why." "What do you think of" – super models I made up. That's just my

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533 own obsession. *[Laughter]* You know, garbage disposals, school uniforms – you
534 know, all this stuff – honor, right?

535 We are saying no, that that is not college and career ready writing, 'cause in
536 college and career ready writing you either have to make an argument based on
537 evidence that is visible to others than yourself, or convey complex information
538 clearly. Narrative plays a crucial role, but as you grow older it is to support your
539 ability to inform or argue or make truly extraordinary, imaginative literature. But
540 in other words, it isn't standalone as your pedestal for college and career
541 readiness.

542 To give you a sense of how striking the data is on this subject, in Minnesota a
543 group of college professors got together in what I thought was quite an
544 imaginative move, calling themselves Ready or Not, Writing. And they asked
545 students around the state to submit essays that they would deem ready or not.
546 They got over 90 percent narrative writing and deemed over 90 percent of it not
547 college ready, period. So it's consequential, what we ask kids and teachers to
548 do.

549 The third shift in the standards is a shift of emphasis towards the complexity of
550 texts. What we've often had in reading standards, and we've tried our best to
551 avoid this in our own, is false distinctions between reading skills across grades.
552 So in sixth grade you understand a character's motivation – does this sound
553 familiar? And in eighth grade you understand their underlying motivation.
554 *[Laughter]* Well, you know, as a New Yorker I can tell you that most people's
555 motivations are underlying unless they're mugging you, so it's not that helpful a
556 distinction. What does change over time is not the skills with which you read, but
557 your ability to do them with more and more complex steps, with increasing depth
558 as those texts demand. These standards for the first time create an explicit
559 staircase of text complexity, because the other worrisome data we have is that
560 we have systematically reduced the complexity of texts in students' hands while
561 the demands of college have not changed, and career. And for all those snobs
562 who think college is so much better than career or technical subject, the average
563 demand of career and technical texts is slightly higher than that of a first-year
564 college course, though they hover around the same level.

565 There's been really exciting work in measuring text complexity. Two leaders in
566 figuring that out for us are David and Meredith Leban, who are over there, who
567 convened with help from IFL and others all the leading researchers and how you
568 measure this. There's been some great works by Cometrics and other leaders

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569 and Tom Landar – we’re talking about all sorts of interesting work in how you
570 measure this. But for your sakes, the really exciting thing is for the first time
571 there’s a measure in the standards that insists that students at each level are
572 encountering texts of adequate complexity.

573 Nonetheless, you could nonetheless be defeated, because the most popular
574 instructional practice for students who are behind is to replace their core reading
575 with leveled text at their level, right? So if you were to actually look at what your
576 kids are being given, they are constantly matched in this seeming noble idea that
577 you should match everything they read to where they are today, often called a
578 proximal zone of development, et cetera.

579 Let me be rather clear. Leveled readers and reading at your own level has a
580 crucial role to play for kids in terms of their vocabulary growth, their love of
581 reading, and has a very important role, so I’m not saying kind of just get rid of it.
582 But what I am saying is the core of instruction, if we want kids to catch up, has to
583 be the deliberate study of sufficiently complex texts, again and – we cannot
584 exclude students from that and expect them to magically catch up. That’s a
585 scaffolded environment, do you get me? Where their frustration – they are
586 expected to be frustrated. That frustration is managed. It’s part of the classroom
587 community, and they engage repeatedly in dealing with things that are more
588 difficult than they can handle.

589 One of the reasons tragically we’re seeing kids who can read at a fourth grade
590 level then fall more and more behind, is if we just give them stuff they’re
591 comfortable with they’ll never make it past that next level of complexity, which is
592 the eighth grade text. Am I making sense? So what schooling has to become is
593 the deliberate encounter of sufficiently complex texts where level of text plays an
594 independent role; there’s also intervention and other support.

595 And of course there’s the attendant vocabulary of complex texts, which involves,
596 as you know, not just domain-specific vocabulary like cell wall or amoeba, but the
597 kinds of words that are prevalent in all complex texts, like the word prevalent
598 itself, or hypothesis, or consequence. These words are often not helpfully
599 highlighted or in bold on the right side of a page as you’re reading, and if
600 teachers don’t pay attention to teaching them they’re an invisible wall which
601 prevents students from reading anything of sufficient complexity.

602 Those are the three rough changes, the rough shifts. But focusing on those, I
603 don’t mean to exclude several other critical parts of reading instruction, so let me

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604 just clarify that. In K-2 in particular and going forward for kids who need it, a
605 strong dose of foundational skills for those students who need it is absolutely
606 essential, and those skills are outlined with care in the core standards. So I
607 didn't mean to say we can leave that stuff out all of a sudden. That systematic
608 instruction remains essential, particularly for students who are behind or don't get
609 reading immediately. Practice in fluency remains essential and will be more
610 demanding as students are reading more complex texts. Vocabulary, as you can
611 sense from what I'm talking about, built through reading and developing
612 knowledge from the earliest grades, is a constant obsession of reading
613 instruction. And when I talk to you soon about reading something carefully, you'll
614 notice there's a constant attention to syntax, to the structure of language in
615 everything you're doing.

616 So given what I've said about literacy, what would I do about it? I'm gonna give
617 you a few quick things to do. Number one, and the biggest for year one, is to
618 build a culture of citing evidence in the classroom when you write and speak
619 about texts, period. That is, when students say something about a text, dare I
620 say they might be accountable for their talk and refer to the evidence on which
621 their statements are made? *[Laughter]* You'll find this accountability is also a
622 check on the teachers. Do you see? It works both ways. If teachers are
623 constantly asking, "Where's the evidence in the text for your answer?" it's harder
624 to ask a question which doesn't require evidence in the text. So do you see? It's
625 like an interesting – it's like, "Cool, it works both ways," right? It works in science.
626 It works in history. It works in social studies. So I would do a campaign around
627 evidence-supported answers in your districts this year, period. Does that make
628 sense? I mean it as the simplest of fundamental shifts, honoring evidence.

629 Other things I would do this year – so one is the focus on evidence. So I would
630 look for 20 percent – we said today – I would love you to do your own survey. So
631 walk around the classrooms and see what percentage of classes have questions
632 have text-dependent questions when they study a piece of literature, history,
633 science, where kids need to read the text in front of them to answer. My aim is to
634 get to 80 percent, and I would expect that you'll be in 20 to 30 if you're lucky. So
635 that's a year one shift.

636 The second shift of course is the texts students are reading. So in year one what
637 you're trying to do is get more informational text into the elementary school,
638 okay? There are various curricula, but I'm not yet ready to recommend and just
639 say go to one. It's like mathematics. It will take time for coherent curricula to
640 develop in the early years. But for now, flooding the zone with knowledge in K-5
641 is not a bad move. Do you see what I'm saying? Just developing a much more

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642 balanced sense of the role of knowledge-based reading as well as literary
643 reading in K-5.

644 In sixth through twelfth grade I would challenge my science, history, and ELA
645 teachers in the following way: Pick at least three texts – I’m being really careful
646 here – that are worthy of careful reading, and gain as much knowledge and
647 insight as you can from those texts with your students. So when you say history
648 teachers are teaching, I want to be very clear what I mean, ‘cause history
649 teachers or social studies teachers say, “We already have texts in our classroom.
650 We have the textbook. We have other texts.” But let me give you an example
651 classroom. If you are teaching Madison’s Federalist Paper 51 and you’re a
652 history teacher, and you say, “We’re gonna discuss today what are the three
653 things about faction you really need to know,” and you give them those things,
654 and you’ve got the text, you quote it every now and then, that is not gaining
655 knowledge through reading, right? ‘Cause you can talk a lot about faction. We
656 all got a lot of faction. But that is not the same as reading Madison to find – if
657 you instead handed out a single page of Federalist Paper 51 and said, “Based on
658 this text and this text alone, what can you discern Madison means or does not
659 mean by faction?” then you are reading. Am I being clear? That’s what I mean
660 by a text-dependent question, where there’s no answer but looking closer at the
661 text in front of you.

662 I’m saying for science and history teachers, they choose at least three sources to
663 examine with that kind of care. And English/Language Arts, they should choose
664 some combination of literature like that, and also what we call in the standards
665 literary non-fiction. Literary non-fiction is non-fiction written for a broad audience,
666 and here I don’t mainly mean memoir or autobiography or biography, even
667 though that is literary non-fiction. I mean literary non-fiction in the standards is
668 about literary non-fiction that conveys information or an argument, like the
669 founding documents of this country, the Gettysburg Address – that’s actually not
670 a founding document but in response to them – but the Declaration, the
671 Preamble to the Constitution, and then the great conversation that unfolds after
672 them, the Gettysburg Address, the Letter from Birmingham Jail, et cetera, et
673 cetera – For Freedom speech. That’s a vibrant source of text that this country
674 has that has its rightful role in the ELA as well as the history classroom, ‘cause
675 perhaps in no American writing is there a finer fusing of thought and word than in
676 those writings, and hence they are very worthy of an English/Language Arts
677 teacher’s attention. So that would be the second thing I would do, is infuse the
678 curriculum with those texts and challenge those teachers.

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679 So I want to give you an example of how I would align – I’m gonna enter a dark
680 territory here, because it’s controversial, but I figure you already probably dislike
681 me, so why not just go a little bit further? How many of you are working on
682 teacher evaluation at the same time as you’re working on these standards?
683 *[Laughter]* That’s really fun, right, to evaluate your teachers on the last set of
684 standards while you’re trying to inaugurate a new set of standards before the
685 measures are really viable and hold them accountable today? It’s a really very
686 smart system we’ve developed.

687 I want to try to cut through it. I’m gonna say something kind of controversial. I
688 think there are two sets of phrases in teacher evaluation that are kind of dead-on-
689 arrival. What I mean by that is they seem to have meaning but they don’t
690 anymore. One is “use data to inform instruction.” Like, thank you so very much
691 for that insight. I think your teachers are looking back at you when you say this
692 and they’re like, “Whatever.” It is, like, no gas in the car unless we are much
693 more specific.

694 The second vacuous statement is “plan, engage, revise,” like you know, these
695 categories for these teacher evaluation _____. It’s like, please help me. Have
696 a clear objective, blah, blah, blah – you know what I mean? If there is anyone
697 who can prove that has led to better teaching I would invite it, but imagine how
698 deadly it is to your average teacher to hear these kind of vague phrases thrown
699 at them.

700 So I’m gonna throw at you instead in literacy five questions you could ask as a
701 part of teacher observation that might actually not be reductive and stupid.
702 *[Laughter]* This is controversial territory to wade into, but I think it’s kind of
703 interesting, ‘cause you’re doing it. Why not make it productive?

704 Number one: Is there a text or texts under discussion? And if there are, are they
705 of a sufficiently high quality and complexity? Period. I think you would be
706 surprised to see how many classrooms the answer is no to the first part of the
707 question. It’s very hard to teach people to read better when there’s no text under
708 discussion. Number one: Is there a text under discussion, and what is its
709 complexity or quality?

710 Number two: What are the quality of the questions asked about the text? Are
711 they text-dependent? Are they coherent? Are they worth answering? Do they
712 encourage students to attend to what’s interesting or specific in this text? Two.

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713 Number three: Is there evidence of students drawing from the text in their
714 speaking and writing?

715 Number four: From how diverse a set of students is that evidence available?
716 That is, is there evidence not just some but all students are speaking and writing
717 using evidence from the text? And don't only look at – please – who you see
718 talking in a classroom or their apparent engagement, because when you teach
719 like this, really focused on evidence within a text, there are moments of highly
720 productive frustration and silence where a student might be rethinking and
721 wondering and highly engaged but keeping their mouth shut. But you do want to
722 see it emerge in their writing, of course, if they're not speaking about it.

723 Number five: What is the quality of teacher feedback, of the feedback students
724 receive on that work that we've gathered and its growth?

725 To me that is a much more exciting set of criteria to engage with a literacy
726 teacher about than, "Did you have a plan? How were your objectives? Were
727 your students engaged?" Who can determine these things? The things I just
728 described to you are countable. That is, in the best meaning of accountable,
729 they are literally things you can count. And so I'd ask you to think about literacy
730 in this way. While literacy seems like the most mysterious and vague and kind of
731 touchy-feely of our disciplines, I think it can be much improved by daring to count
732 within literacy, and by daring to observe the accumulation of these kinds of facts.
733 Does that make sense as a beginning?

734 In the second year of literacy, what I'm hoping is that we will have developed,
735 and others together with us, a much finer set of exemplars for your teachers to
736 use. We are already open-source publishing a set of exemplars of looking at
737 fewer texts more carefully, just like in math. There's a real slowdown in literacy.
738 If you're gonna work on more complex texts, you have to slow down. Our model
739 of the Gettysburg Address recommends three to five days of instruction on those
740 three short paragraphs; on the Letter from Birmingham Jail, at least two weeks to
741 carefully analyze that remarkable argument and its shape. That's before you go
742 on to additional sources and making comparisons and synthetic moves. I'm
743 reminded by my friend Tony, this is part of instruction, these exemplars. They're
744 not showing the whole range of it. But part of the work has to shift to reading
745 short things worth of rereading with care to build a culture of this kind of
746 reexamination. Am I making sense? So you should see teachers beginning to
747 do that work.

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748 It is near time for us to conclude. I had another kind of treat, but I'm kind of
749 saved by not having to do with it, but I'm gonna outline it for you, which is I have
750 two poems to share which are "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop and "Do Not Go
751 Gentle Into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas. And for those of you who want
752 to talk about them, I advise – and, Matt, where'd you put that? Did I – I was
753 gonna – I have some –

754 *Lauren Resnick:* What are you looking for?

755 *David Coleman:* Do you have them? You have the documents, but I have
756 something even better. What? Is it under my chair? Oh, thank you. So rather
757 than doing what I was going to do – I'll tell you a little bit what I was going to do
758 [*Laughter*], which is that – how many people in this very educated audience who
759 have so much more qualifications than I do – how many of you know the
760 derivation of the word "symposium"? I'm giving you a hint.

761 To me a great example of how far the academy has fallen from Ancient Greece is
762 the demeaning of the word "symposium," 'cause what symposium used to mean
763 in the good old days is to drink together, [*Laughter*] "sum" meaning together, and
764 "posea" meaning to drink.

765 So for those of you who want in the bar later to spend some time with these two
766 remarkable things we won't have time to do together now, I'm gonna leave you
767 with a couple of questions about them. What are three things you find similar
768 about these poems, and what are one or two that you find different? Why is
769 Dylan Thomas in the first line of "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" – why
770 doesn't he say gently instead of gentle, 'cause he's talking about you going, isn't
771 he? Shouldn't it be an adverb? Did he make, like, a simple grammatical error in
772 his finest poem? Why is the bay green? It's the only color in the poem. What's
773 the difference in tone between these two poems? How do they address their
774 obvious shared topic of loss in very different tones? What does Elizabeth Bishop
775 mean by her joking voice?

776 There's so much to talk about that we don't have time to, and I'm gonna allow
777 you to escape. But I hope as you walked into classrooms embracing the core
778 you'd begin to see teachers and students addressing questions of that humility
779 and intensity about texts that matter. And with that, good night. Thank you.

780 *Rosita Apodaca:* David, will you –

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781 *David Coleman:* I can't take this on the plane, so for anyone who wants some
782 bourbon it is here for you. *[Laughter]*

783 *Rosita Apodaca:* David, will you entertain a question if there's one on the
784 floor?

785 *David Coleman:* Of course.

786 *Rosita Apodaca:* Okay. Any burning questions before we close? Oh, come
787 on. Yes, sir. This is Prince George's County. *[Laughter]*

788 *David Coleman:* The much-forgotten district.

789 *Audience Member:* So I actually had a question for you in June but I've since
790 answered it. But I wanted to share the insight. I heard you do Gettysburg
791 Address and you dove right into it, and my question was gonna be in unit
792 planning. What is the scaffolding to get to Gettysburg address? But I had the
793 opportunity to work with a class and they answered the question. You don't need
794 the scaffolding, that you jump right into the high-level questioning and the kids
795 naturally fall into that, without this sense of we have to build it from the bottom
796 up, that you could dive right in. So thanks for not answering my question back in
797 June.

798 *David Coleman:* I'm very moved by that, yeah.

799 *Rosita Apodaca:* Thanks a lot, David.

800 *David Coleman:* I'll just say a word about that. This is a very contentious and
801 complicated issue, which is the question of how much preparatory work do you
802 need to do. And I provocatively in the one moment I had at the end threw these
803 two poems at you without a short biography of Elizabeth or Dylan Thomas, and
804 without much about these poems, because to introduce them is to speak first.
805 And in my view most authors lavish a great deal of time on the way they begin
806 and I am hesitant to interfere with their attempt to set the table. And what the
807 gentleman just described is very difficult test, the Gettysburg Address. We've
808 refrained thus far from offering the obvious contextual background you could to
809 let students first experience its words and worry about them and wrestle with

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810 them. And that requires that you suffer some frustration and disorientation, and
811 the question is do we want to insulate students from that or practice them in it?
812 Because I think good readers experience this constantly and wrestle with it, and
813 then gradually as they get the most they can from a text, do turn to other
814 sources, et cetera. But part of this is if just you knew – I just have to tell you, the
815 amount of time spent pre-teaching and pre-reading would stun you. It's like in
816 textbooks there's like 20 pages of pre-reading material before you even get to the
817 text in front of you. So it's something to watch out for. Yeah?

818 *Audience Member:* I have to say I think I agree that we don't scaffold, but I'm not
819 really sure I can say we don't scaffold at all.

820 *David Coleman:* No –

821 *Audience Member:* We scaffold differently, and I think that Dr. Arbugast made a
822 good point. You don't build all that background over and over again _____ the
823 students can do it. You get _____ into the text, and it is through the class
824 discussion that percolates up from the students to begin to get scaffold. It's
825 natural and authentic.

826 *David Coleman:* I wish we could do these two poems together, 'cause I so
827 agree with you. Do you learn phrases like stanza or rhyme before you start, or
828 do they emerge as necessary as part of the discussion? But I think the big idea
829 here is to allow the scaffolds to come as needed to understand this thing. When
830 you try to give scaffolds independent of it, either in the form of the knowledge you
831 need in advance, or reading skills like the 90th lesson on cause and effect –
832 which kids do not need, right? They know if you hit someone it hurts them.
833 That's cause, that's effect. That's not the problem. *[Laughter]* So it really is a lot
834 of scaffolding because you're reading together much more slowly.

835 I want to be clear about this word scaffolding, 'cause there's a ton of it. Every
836 question you're asking, every time you're interpreting a particular sentence
837 together, you're scaffolding that discussion. You're scaffolding to a discussion of
838 syntax, of vocabulary, of terminology. You're just choosing to do it in the context
839 of reading something worth reading.

840 *Rosita Apodaca:* David, just in closing could you just say just one or two
841 sentences about English language learners?

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842 *David Coleman:* I think we were just talking about them, because this is
843 where the anxiety rests with us most. So let me very blunt about all this with
844 English language learners.

845 *Rosita Apodaca:* Go ahead.

846 *David Coleman:* I believe there must be a Bill of Rights for English language
847 learners in this country, so I'm not gonna talk to you about what you expect me to
848 talk about first, which is the accommodations we must make for English language
849 learners. I think the first thing we need to do is say they have a right to sufficiently
850 complex text. I was with the leading publisher of ELL materials for history and
851 social studies, and do you know what they said to me, like not fooling said to me?
852 "We publish mainly picture books and low-level texts for these students. Are you
853 saying that has to change?" And I was like, "Yeah." *[Laughter]*

854 Second, they have a right to be equal before the text. That is, when I talk about
855 all the evidence being before you and reading like a detective, I think this is a civil
856 rights issue for these students, that they are brought into the conversation as
857 equal partners to interpret that. It's not a way of excluding anybody from the
858 conversation. It's a way of saying you're all equal to it.

859 Third – anyway, we could talk about this. They have a right to talk about
860 academic subjects with evidence rather than constantly being asked about their
861 own experience, which is a way, perhaps, of entertaining their adult teachers, but
862 not of advancing their academic learning, if I may be so preposterous to say so.

863 So I think we need a shift and am willing to make enemies to do so, 'cause I think
864 these kids are being poorly served. However, there's a body of excellent
865 practitioners in the English language learner community that has long been
866 advocating for sufficient complexity, for – and there's a lot of scaffolding. The
867 debate we're having – a lively one – is how much happens upfront versus how
868 much can happen within the text. And from every text you're trying to build as
869 much knowledge as possible. Remember when I talked about elementary school
870 reading more knowledge-based text? And by reading Gettysburg this way you
871 learn a lot from Lincoln about what's going on. So I love knowledge, and I love
872 background knowledge as a strength to further reading. I just don't want to
873 eclipse the reading of each new text by piling it on in advance.

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874 So what I'm trying to talk to you about in terms of scaffolding is be careful that
875 scaffolding resembles the experiences these students will have. For example, if
876 you say before English language learners read a text they need to watch a movie
877 and then do this and all this other stuff, what happens on the exam? You've just
878 created a very high stakes moment for that child, 'cause they've never practiced
879 reading it – do you see what you've done to them? The exam becomes their
880 super high stakes moment of delivering a performance they've never delivered,
881 'cause you've never cultivated that. You've never said, "First, how much
882 evidence can you get from here? I know it's disorienting. Tell me what you can
883 get," and then build from there.

884 So we're in deep discussions with the leaders of ELL learning and it's very
885 exciting. But I will tell you I think we need rights as well as accommodation, and
886 we need a bolder view if we're gonna transform the performance of these kids.
887 Thank you so much.

888 *Rosita Apodaca:* Thank you very much, David. Thank you so much. You
889 were very interesting and inspiring.

890 *[End of Audio]*